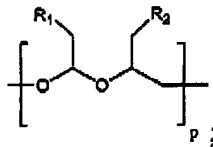


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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. **(Previously Presented)** A biodegradable, biocompatible polyacetal derivative derived from exhaustive lateral oxidative cleavage of dextran, the polyacetal derivative having the structure:



wherein p is an integer;

for n independent occurrences of the bracketed structure p, R₁ and R₂ are each hydroxyl;

for m independent occurrences of the bracketed structure p, one of R₁ and R₂ is hydroxyl, the other is a maleimidocarboxylate moiety;

the sum m+n=p; and

m:n is from 0.1:10 to 1:25.

2. **(Canceled)**

3. **(Previously Presented)** A polyacetal-protein conjugate, wherein said conjugate is obtained by conjugation of a protein with the polyacetal of claim 1.

4. **(Canceled)**

5. **(Original)** The polyacetal-protein conjugate of claim 3, wherein the protein is selected from the group consisting of an antibody, etanercept, insulin, gastrin, prolactin, adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH), thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH), luteinizing hormone (LH), follicle stimulating hormone (FSH), human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), motilin, interferon alpha, interferon beta, interferon gamma, tumor necrosis factor (TNF), tumor necrosis factor-binding protein (TNF-bp), brain derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), glial derived neurotrophic factor

(GDNF), neurotrophic factor 3 (NT3), fibroblast growth factors (FGF), neurotrophic growth factor (NGF), bone growth factors such as osteoprotegerin (OPG), insulin-like growth factors (IGFs), macrophage colony stimulating factor (M-CSF), granulocyte macrophage colony stimulating factor (GM-CSF), megakaryocyte derived growth factor (MGDF), keratinocyte growth factor (KGF), thrombopoietin, platelet-derived growth factor (PDGF), colony stimulating growth factors (CSFs), bone morphogenetic protein (BMP), superoxide dismutase (SOD), tissue plasminogen activator (TPA), urokinase, streptokinase, kallikrein, flt3 ligand, CD40 ligand, thrombopoietin, calcitonin, Fas ligand, ligand for receptor activator of NF-kappa B (RANKL), tumor necrosis factor (TNF)-related apoptosis-inducing ligand (TRAIL), thymic stroma-derived lymphopoietin, mast cell growth factor, stem cell growth factor, epidermal growth factor, RANTES, growth hormone, insulinotropin, parathyroid hormone, glucagon, interleukins 1 through 18, colony stimulating factors, lymphotoxin-beta, leukemia inhibitory factor, oncostatin-M, an Eph receptor, and Ephrin ligands.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) A composition comprising a polyacetal-protein conjugate of claim 3 ~~claim 3 or 4~~, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

8. (Previously Presented) A process for preparing a biodegradable, biocompatible polyacetal-protein conjugate, said process comprising: (a) providing a polyacetal derivative of claim 1; (b) conjugating said polyacetal derivative to a protein to provide a polyacetal-protein conjugate; and (c) isolating said polyacetal-protein conjugate.

9. (Previously Presented) A method of treating obesity comprising administering an effective amount of a polyacetal-leptin conjugate to a patient in need thereof, wherein the polyacetal-leptin conjugate is derived from conjugation of leptin with the polyacetal derivative of claim 1.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Canceled)

12. (Previously Presented) The polyacetal derivative of claim 1, wherein the maleimidocarboxylate moiety is maleimidopropionate having the structure:

